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L4*DB=JPAB,EPAB,DWPI,TDBD; PLUR=YES; OP=OR*L3

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07187327 SUPPLIER NUMBER: 15141854 (THIS IS THE FULL TEXT)
**Not just the design is incredible; systems provide showmanship at
Incredible Universe. (Cover Story)**

Fox, Bruce

Chain Store Age Executive with Shopping Center Age, v70, n1, p89(3)
Jan, 1994

TEXT:

One look at Incredible Universe, Tandy's new format of consumer electronics superstores, and the strategy is clear: Tandy is seeking to bring new levels of glamour, glitz and showmanship to an already glamorous category.

Consumers are sold on high-ticket home theater systems in posh demonstration rooms where giant televisions are displayed in a wide-screen format, and the walls shake with the rumble of action movies like "Star Wars."

Or they're sold on high-end car stereos by sitting behind the wheel of a vintage model automobile and cranking up classic Rolling Stones tunes on speakers that take up half the back seat.

In the entrance, called the rotunda, of the 100,000-sq.-ft. selling area of the store, consumers are welcomed with thumping music, laser lights, and an enormous array of supersized video monitors that hang from the ceiling. Every category in the store is massively merchandised, reinforcing the idea in the consumer's mind that the store is the place to go for anything in electronics. As the consumer leaves the store, a sign overhead reads, "We Hope You Enjoyed the Show."

A division of Forth Worth, Texas-based Tandy, Incredible Universe now has three stores: in Arlington and Dallas, Texas, and Wilsonville, Ore. A fourth store will open in Miami in March, and a fifth will open in Tempe, Ariz., this summer. The first store had annualized sales of \$60 million.

Tandy plans to have a total of 17 Incredible Universes operating by the end of 1994, and 60 stores by the end of 1998.

"This format is going to change the rules for playing in the consumer electronics market," says Rich Hollander, vp of Incredible Universe. A 21-year Tandy veteran, Hollander is the division's top executive and reports directly to Tandy's ceo, John Roach.

"To play in consumer electronics before, you needed to deliver three things: price, service and selection," Hollander explains. "We've upped the ante so that you have to deliver one more thing: showmanship."

Considered to be a very important part of that showmanship are the behind-the-scenes in-store systems. Indeed, Hollander likes to point out that each Incredible Universe store has more computer equipment running it than the first Apollo spacecraft mission.

This hardware includes an IBM 4680 POS system with 32 terminals and two controllers, and an IBM AS/400 that runs all non-POS applications including distribution, home delivery and car stereo installation.

The AS/400 is also hooked in to the 240-sq.-ft. disk jockey booth that sits in the rotunda and houses Sony and Pioneer equipment that controls the video, audio and theatrical lighting throughout the store.

The in-store systems make their presence felt from the very start of each customer's experience. A Tandy tradition in its Radio Shack stores is the collection of customer data at the point of sale for each transaction. Incredible Universe takes a more proactive approach to data collection. Upon one's first **visit** to an Incredible Universe **store**, a customer must register as a member by providing personal **information** on a questionnaire. In return, one **receives** a barcoded membership card, without which one can't make purchases. Membership is free.

Through this membership process, Hollander says, Incredible Universe is able to create a sophisticated database of every customer's purchasing behavior, yielding invaluable opportunities for target marketing. A customer who buys a personal computer, for example, might later be sent a mailing about a software sale. Or a customer who purchases high-end stereo equipment might be sent literature about big-screen televisions.

Catalog showroom: With many of the items it sells, Incredible Universe

operates much like a catalog showroom, thereby keeping its aisles relatively unencumbered by shopping carts. Customers make their selections on the selling floor, and then either collect their purchases at the store's front-end pickup area or schedule them for at-home delivery.

In these cases, a store employee initiates the sale by scanning the bar-code on the customer's membership card and then on the ticket of the item the customer has selected. The employee uses a penlight scanner attached to a handheld, pen-based computer called a PalmPad, made by Grid Systems Corp.

"The PalmPad is pretty slick," Hollander says. "It's definitely a part of the show that goes on here."

Grid, a pioneer in pen-based computing, is a recently-acquired division of Tandy. The Grid PalmPad weighs 2.5 pounds and includes an 8088 microprocessor, 128KB of RAM, an LCD screen, and an electronic pen-like stylus that can be used to enter letters or numbers by hand. Grid's PenRight software environment performs the task of recognizing the handwritten characters.

Hollander acknowledges that pen-based systems have been the target of much mocking criticism in the past few months, since the introduction of so-called Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs).

These pen-based products--including AT&T's EO, Apple's Newton, and Tandy's own Zoomer--start at a price of about \$700 and are meant to serve as portable organizers, appointment books, and even as cellular fax machines. But they have taken a bad rap from reviewers for their handwriting recognition capabilities, which are seen as lacking.

The most maligned has been the Newton, whose reading skills were recently lampooned by the comic strip "Doonesbury."

Hollander insists, however, that the PalmPad's reading skills are robust. And store employees confirm that, after some practice, they can get the PalmPads to work with little difficulty.

At Incredible Universe, there may be as many as 80 employees equipped with Grid PalmPads walking the sales floor at any point in time. The PalmPads connect real-time, through narrow-band wireless radio frequency communications, to three PCs equipped with antennas and Proxim RangeLAN receivers. These PCs, in turn, connect to the store's backroom AS/400.

If a customer wishes to have an item delivered to his home, the store associate uses the PalmPad to set up a time and date for delivery. If the customer prefers to take the item upon leaving the store, the PalmPad sets in motion an operation that first confirms the item is in stock, and then moves it from the store's attached 65,000-sq.-ft. warehouse to the front-end pickup area within about 90 seconds.

No receipt is printed by the PalmPad. Instead, the customer proceeds to a front-end POS terminal and presents his membership card. When the card is scanned, the terminal brings up the information about the item or items ordered for purchase. The cashier confirms the information, the transaction is completed, and the customer is handed a receipt.

Hollander concedes it would take little extra effort to turn the PalmPad into a handheld POS terminal with a credit card reader, which could save the customer the extra step of proceeding to a front-end POS terminal, at least in the case of credit transactions.

"But we rejected that idea," he says, "because handheld POS terminals generate tiny receipts. Our average transaction is \$200, and some go as high as \$10,000 or more. When someone spends that kind of money, they want a full-size receipt." He cites this philosophy as an example of how Incredible Universe resists becoming so enamored of in-store systems that it thinks only of its own needs and not the needs of its customers.

In addition, he points out that the PalmPads have made lines at the point of sale a rarity, because they greatly reduce the time it takes to complete a transaction.

More uses: The PalmPads have other features, Hollander says. They can access product warranty information or pull up a complete database of a customer's previous purchases.

They are also used twice a year for inventory-taking on the selling floor, performing a vital accuracy-check on the inventory records that are maintained from point-of-sale data, and from cycle-counting the warehouse every three weeks with handheld terminals from Telxon.

Hollander explains that each Incredible Universe store carries some

85,000 skus, 70,000 of which are movies and music, and that many of these skus are automatically reordered from vendors through a Quick Response program that "obviously depends on accurate inventory information to be successful."

He emphasizes, however, that the major value of the PalmPads, and of all in-store technologies used at Incredible Universe, is to deliver to "guests" a great shopping experience through outstanding customer service.

His use of the term "guests" to describe customers is no accident. Recognizing that no company in America does a better job at customer service than the Walt Disney Co., Hollander says, Incredible Universe has borrowed from Disney's terminology, calling its customers "guests," its sales associates "cast members," and its behind-the-scenes employees "producers," "directors" or "stagehands."

"It further plays up the whole showmanship aspect of the store," he says, "and it really works."

Incredible Universe A division of Tandy Fort Worth, Texas

Vice president: Rich Hollander (reports directly to Tandy's ceo, John Roach)

Sales: \$140 million (1993 est.)

Profits: Division is expected to break even in 1993

Type of stores: Consumer electronics superstores

Number and size of stores: Three with 100,000 sq. ft. of selling space, 60,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space

Areas of operation: Texas, Oregon

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MICROSOFT: The Microsoft Plaza Brings Product Returns Convenience To Online Shoppers

December 01, 1997

Byline: Business/Technology Editors

FAIRFIELD, Iowa--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Dec. 1, 1997--

First Online Mall to Offer Returns Made Easy!SM

Service from **PackageNet**

In a move which provides maximum convenience to online shoppers, The Microsoft Plaza on The Microsoft Network(TM), is now offering the option of a merchandise returns service through the **PackageNet** Returns Made Easy!(SM) program. This is the first time online shoppers can take advantage of a fast and convenient method for returning merchandise purchased online that doesn't meet their needs - a chore often considered to be an inhibitor to widespread consumer acceptance of online shopping.

Using the Returns Made Easy!(SM) service from **PackageNet**, Plaza customers can simply take their online purchases to one of 4,000 nationwide supermarkets that offer **PackageNet** UPS shipping services. Plaza customers simply click on the returns button on the Plaza home page (<http://plaza.msn.com>) or they can call the **PackageNet** locator hotline (800 369 8573) to select their nearest store locations. Once identified, the online customer takes the product they wish to return with them the next time they shop for groceries, use the **PackageNet** in-store service at the store's customer service counter and ship the product back to the supplier via UPS at favorable rates.

"Offering consumers the ultimate convenience is the major objective of The Microsoft Plaza. While consumers love the convenience of shopping on-line, occasionally they may have to return an item," explains Deborah Levinger, Business Manager, The Microsoft Plaza.

"**PackageNet** has taken the hassle out of returning with the Returns Made Easy! SM program. The Microsoft Plaza is pleased to be the first online mall to offer the reliable and highly convenient programs from **PackageNet** which Plaza shoppers can access on-line."

"Little attention has been paid to the fundamental requirement of electronic commerce - the delivery of goods," said Ken Ross, chief executive officer of **PackageNet**. "Now time pressed consumers demand the convenience and ease of returning. That is why we chose to partner with the supermarket industry. Supermarkets have evolved into a 24-hour convenience destination. Consumers buy groceries, have film developed, and bank in supermarkets, now they can now make returns anytime, day, evening or weekends."

The Microsoft Plaza (<http://www.plaza.msn.com>) offers a fast, easy and convenient alternative to battling the crowds in stores across America and makes one stop shopping on the Internet a reality. From Eddie Bauer, Barnes & Noble, Disney and Godiva to Tower Records and Virtual Vineyards, The Microsoft Plaza has a growing collection of the nation's favorite retailers.

PackageNet and Returns Made Easy are service trademarks of Express Shipping Centers, Inc. which operates the nation's largest network of United Parcel Service shipping counters. Through this network, the company offers consumers convenient access to UPS services in close to 4,000 supermarkets in 49 states. The company, headquartered in Fairfield, Iowa has been in operation since 1990 and employees about 70 people.

Microsoft (NASDAQ:MSFT) is the worldwide leader in software for personal computers. The company offers a wide range of products and services for business and personal use, each designed with the mission of making it easier and more enjoyable for people to take advantage of the full power of personal computing every day.

Editor's Note: Additional information about **PackageNet** is available at <http://www.packagenet.com>. **PackageNet** is a registered trademark and Returns Made Easy! is a SM trademark of Express Shipping Centers, Inc. Other company names referenced herein may be trademarks or registered trademarks of the respective corporation.

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KEYWORD: IOWA

INDUSTRY KEYWORD: COMED COMPUTERS/ELECTRONICS

INTERACTIVE/MULTIMEDIA/INTERNET

Today's News On The Net - Business Wire's full file on the Internet
with Hyperlinks to your home page.

URL: <http://www.businesswire.com>

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1672236 Supplier Number: 01672236 (THIS IS THE FULLTEXT)
Chains Testing Shipping Center, Disney Event
(King Soopers, Kroger, and Vons promoting in-store package-shipping centers
through co-promotion with Buena Vista Home Video)
Supermarket News, v 46, n 47, p 50+
November 18, 1996
WORD COUNT: 377

TEXT:
By JOEL ELSON

DENVER -- In tests, King Soopers here, Kroger Co., Cincinnati, and Vons Cos., Arcadia, Calif., are promoting their in-store package-shipping centers through a co-promotion with Disney's Buena Vista Home Video that will culminate in the fourth quarter.

King Soopers is offering instant \$3 savings on UPS shipping charges to customers who mail selected Disney children's videos at the in-store **PackageNet** shipping counter.

Kroger's Cincinnati and Dayton marketing-area stores, and Vons' Pavilion stores, on the other hand, tried to boost visibility of their UPS parcel shipping service by offering a \$5 rebate on the purchase of Disney sell-through videos, "Winnie the Pooh-Spookable Pooh" and "Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

There are 177 stores involved at all three chains that began a Christmas push Oct. 29 that will run through Jan. 10, 1997.

The co-promotion with Disney launches **PackageNet**'s new "Gift 'N Send" program, which aims to raise customer awareness of in-store shipping services and improve sales of Disney's Halloween and Masterpiece Collection videos. Customers mail the video rebate forms to **PackageNet**.

Kevin Twohy, senior vice president at **PackageNet**, supplier of UPS parcel shipping services, Fairfield, Iowa, said that during the fourth quarter retailers will tout their **PackageNet** shipping centers through register receipts and in-store signs.

He said the seasonally decorated shipping envelop and holiday greeting card, which **PackageNet** supplies as part of the promotion, and rebate offers represent \$6 to \$8 of added-value for consumers. **PackageNet** developed the greeting card on its own. It is attached to the mailing envelope for convenience, said Twohy.

"It's good way to promote package mailing and stimulate traffic at our mailing centers. The point-of-purchase materials on shippers alert customers to the shipping centers," said a King Soopers executive who asked to remain unidentified.

King Soopers positioned floor shippers of the videos at video sections and at shipping centers with tear-off \$3 savings coupons. Point-of-purchase signs urged shoppers to mail items from the store's package mailing center.

Although rebates were still being calculated, video sales during the first test phase of the promotion, built around Halloween, were described as "modest" by Twohy. He said the early Halloween push was to get the test phase of the promotion off the ground and he expected numbers to pick up during the gift-giving season.

10299036 SUPPLIER NUMBER: 20868631 (THIS IS THE FULL TEXT)
**RIDING THE INTERNET HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO GET ON, HOW FAR CAN IT TAKE
YOU AND ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE READY?**
Supermarket News, v48, n25, p71(1)
June 22, 1998

TEXT:

While a few retailers, notably on-line bookseller amazon.com, have had rapid growth with Internet sales, many companies are still uncertain about what types of products consumers will and won't buy via the Web. Even if consumers show increased willingness to purchase products over the Internet, supermarket retailers are wondering if it makes economic and operational sense for them to sell on-line. There are considerable costs associated with picking, packing and delivering supermarket products, as well as competition from third-party companies specializing in these functions. Electronic commerce may be one area where supermarkets' traditionally conservative approach is appropriate. Many retailers are taking measured steps into on-line shopping, limiting the number and type of products they sell and offering store pick-up rather than home delivery. If the Web becomes as ubiquitous and easy to use as cable TV, which some industry observers predict it will, retailers may have no choice but to offer at least some of their products on-line. One scenario has retailers making scheduled home deliveries of nonperishable staple items, with stores reserved for meat, seafood and fresh produce. Following are the comments of several distributors on the current and future e-commerce possibilities for the supermarket industry: Alan Tempest director, marketing Genuardi's Family Markets Norristown, Pa. www.genuardis.com Within the next year, we plan to use our Web site for an electronic-commerce application, offering items such as gift baskets and deli trays. Customers would be able to specify what they want, at which store they want to pick it up and at what time. Our Web site, which was launched last November, already offers a lot of interactivity. For example, a customer typing in their home address can receive turn-by-turn directions to the nearest Genuardi's store. Further out, within the next two to five years, I believe the Internet as a whole will become a more pleasurable fact of life for consumers. That will be when it's tied into the TV at home, with satellite companies or cable networks "carrying" the Internet. At that point, there will be an opportunity to turn on the Web as easily as clicking a remote, and it will be almost real-time in terms of the accuracy of what's on the screen. When there's access that easy for the masses, e-commerce will be a significant force -- when the Web is available in the living room, den and kitchen. In the meantime, ordering over the Internet raises the question, for the retailer and the consumer, of how they access that order. One scenario is to have the store prepare the order for the consumer to pick up. This could be used for both staple items and prepared meals, with someone placing a dinner order via the Internet from the office. But our consumer research indicates that people still want to go to stores to pick out perishable items. Fred Morsheimer chief information officer Trader Joe's South Pasadena, Calif. www.traderjoes.com Retailers have to ask themselves the fundamental question: What is it worth to offer home-shopping services? With amazon.com, for instance, the book itself is sold at a high margin, and the company offers exactly what the consumer wants, quickly, and at a lower price. This company has done very well by eliminating the middleman, that is, the retailer. For a supermarket retailer to do the same thing, however, they need to find products that have a high enough margin to cover the costs of delivery. This could happen where the retailer is the manufacturer, or with higher-ticket items like perfume or health and beauty care products. And the ordering system has to interface with this separate inventory. This solution could bring retailers into competition with the manufacturers themselves. As it is now, the distribution channel favors producers of product rather than retailers. What retailers can do is take some intermediate steps. One idea is using in-store picking to fulfill home-shopping orders. Mike Brown manager, retail systems United Grocers Portland, Ore. www.ugweb.com Electronic commerce for supermarket retailers

is still an emerging technology. It certainly isn't developing as fast as it is for books, for example, mainly due to the issues of handling perishables. With home-shopping services, a lot of people are dabbling in it, but it seems to cost more money than it makes. (Retailers) are having a hard time matching what consumers want and what the store can deliver. Even if the Internet becomes even more popular than it already is, the percentage of (retailers') customer base using the Internet for ordering will still be small. I don't see the numbers supporting full-scale home shopping until 2004 or 2005. E-commerce is certainly growing, but it's not at a critical mass for retailers to make money. Bob Soles VP, systems development A&P Montvale, N.J. www.efund.com The Internet's role in electronic commerce will certainly grow, but the speed at which it's going to grow is the subject of a lot of speculation. Will the big growth happen in 12 to 18 months, or 48 to 60 months? For the grocery industry, electronic commerce raises a lot of issues in terms of handling and packing product that book and apparel retailers, for example, don't have to deal with. You can't place an order on a doorstep in direct sunlight. This is something retailers have to think about, unless they segregate the types of products that can be ordered over the Internet. Paper products and other types of staples don't have as many handling issues, for example. If you segregate product groups, you have to ask if they link up with what people want to buy. Right now, people are interested in prepared meals and deli platters. But at the other end, a family with a new baby might want a case of Pampers delivered every other week. This type of scheduled, reoccurring replenishment of staples is one possible way to go. Internet ordering raises other questions as well. Are product manufacturers going to "go direct," for example, and sell to consumers over the Internet? Remember also that it was amazon.com, not Barnes & Noble or Borders, that first got into selling books over the Internet. They created a stir. The dynamics are interesting because the retail store is an expensive part of the selling operation, with rent, labor, maintenance and inventory. Selling over the Internet for supermarkets could require a different cost model, perhaps having a store to sell meats and grocery items and selling dry goods via the Web. Becca Anderson spokeswoman Bashas' Markets Chandler, Ariz. www.bashas.com We've been fairly surprised at the interest home shopping over the Internet generated. When we offered these services in conjunction with OnCart, about one-third of the orders came in via the Internet. Since OnCart went out of business and ceased operations with us in March, we've received approximately 10 to 30 e-mails per day asking when the program will resume. We're working on an in-house program which we hope will be available this fall, but it's not easy to set up a call center and Web site to handle 25,000 stockkeeping units. Still, I see Bashas' getting into these more interactive applications via its Web site, including on-line coupons -- even though a large part of our customer base is older people, some of whom are very computer-phobic.

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